

a Nation, working with the Russian people who are our friends, to build a new Russia, a strong Russia, a Russia with a freely elected president who works closely with our President and a new Duma that works with our Congress, a freely elected Duma, even if it includes Communists.

Remember what I said, Mr. Speaker. How can this administration say that we had to work with Yeltsin because of our fear of the Communists? At least the Communists in Russia were elected in free and fair elections, as much as we did not like it.

I wish I could say the same about the Communists in China, which this administration falls all over on a regular basis. If the Communists are those elected by the Russian people, we have to work with them. It does not mean we have to embrace them. It does not mean we do not want to help the pro-Western forces, the formers like the Apple party, the Yabloko party, the Nash Dom, the People's Power party. We still work with them, but we work with all factions in Russia.

My hope is, as we complete this first half of this session, the focus on Russia becomes a dominant focus. As we approach the presidential elections, this country needs to have a national debate in a constructive way over what happened, why did it happen, where did \$20 billion go, what did we get for that investment, and why are the Russian people more negative about America today than they were when they were dominated by a Soviet Communist system?

#### THE BUDGET OF THE UNITED STATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLETCHER). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. STENHOLM. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) has had just a fascinating discourse on a subject which is of extreme importance. I want to commend him for the diligence in which he has pursued a subject that is every bit of importance to our country as he has indicated that it is, and he makes a lot of sense and this is one Member that looks forward to working with him in the days ahead in this very important area.

What I have taken this hour for, and I will be joined by several of our Blue Dog colleagues, is to once again talk about perhaps a little more mundane subject, the budget of the United States and the policies, or lack thereof. A lot of what the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. WELDON) has talked about some of the shortcomings of the Congress and the administration in dealing with Russia, I think, can also be said of this body in dealing with the budget.

Today, I guess we had a little ceremony in which we have now sent the

tax cut down to the President, which he will veto, as he should. One of the policy objectives that the Blue Dogs have suggested all year long is let us be conservative with our actions now as we enjoy the newness of dealing with surpluses.

We are for cutting taxes. Let no one be mistaken about that, but the Blue Dogs have suggested all along that there is a good way and a bad way to get to tax cutting. The bad way, we believe, is what the House and Senate concurring have said to the President, of having a tax cut with projected surpluses that may or may not materialize.

What the Blue Dogs have said, quite clearly, all year long, let us deal with Social Security and Medicare first. Let us have an open and honest debate on the floor of the House, with the best ideas winning, as to how we fix Social Security for the future, because everyone now knows and admits quite publicly that the future of Social Security is bleak unless we, this Congress, make some tough decisions and very, very soon.

We ducked on that one, and I must say that our President ducked on that one, which was unfortunate. Just because the President ducks is no sign that we in the Congress should duck. Here, at least some of us, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. KOLBE) and I, and we have been joined by colleagues on both sides of the aisle now, a few, proposing a Social Security fix.

That is not what I am here to talk about tonight. What I am talking about tonight is the rhetoric that we continue to hear about why we need to have a big tax cut first before we deal with Social Security, before we deal with Medicaid, before we deal with these very important subjects.

These are projected surpluses and one of the dangers that some of us see, particularly the Blue Dog Democrats, and I suspect there are some on both sides of the aisle that see the same danger, spending a projected surplus before it is real can get very dangerous; just like in families. If they have built up a debt on their credit card or personal debt to where it is becoming difficult to pay the interest on that debt and suddenly come into some money, most families will pay down their debt first before they go out and reward themselves with a new car or reward themselves with new options.

That is not what the Congress has voted to do. That is not the issue today.

To those that say well, we are only returning your money to you, that is true but they conveniently overlook one fact. Not only is it your taxes that we talk about and every dime that we spend is your money, but also your debt of \$5.6 trillion that we have built up, \$4 trillion of it basically in the last 10 years, 15, it is your debt.

The Blue Dogs suggest that now is the time to be a little bit conservative

with our children's and grandchildren's future. Instead of once again rewarding us, as this tax cut would do over the next 10 years, we say use this opportunity to pay down the debt so that our children and grandchildren will not have as much debt to pay and as much taxes to pay in order to pay the interest on that debt.

We think that makes a lot of sense. Unfortunately, we have not been able to convince a majority of the House and the Senate concurring that it does make sense, and we understand and we play by those rules and we also very strongly played by the rule that said if one is going to be critical of the other guy's proposal they better have something that they are for. The people back home in the 17th district that I represent, that is what they demand of me.

As we have discussed and asked the question over and over, what do you want to do with this surplus, most people openly and honestly say, pay down the debt.

I do not know why different Members get different answers to this question, except sometimes we ask it differently. If I ask the question, do you want to have a tax cut or do you want us to spend the money, you say tax cut. That would be my answer.

Then we get into another little problem because we have had a whole lot of rhetoric around this body over the last several weeks now, and we are still playing this giant game of chicken of who is going to blink first on the caps, who is going to be the first one to admit that already this year we are spending the Social Security trust fund?

Now, we have tried to outdo each other as to who has the best lockbox, who is going to do the best job of not touching Social Security trust funds next year. Well, I would say to my colleagues, let me share a little secret. We have already done it. This Congress has already dipped into the Social Security trust fund. No matter how we want to score it, it has already happened; little things like declaring the census an emergency, \$4 billion; conveniently using OMB scoring when it suits our purpose of being able to score spending \$16 billion cheaper.

I used to work with my friends on the other side of the aisle quite regularly on this argument when we finally got around to saying our scorekeeper is the Congressional Budget Office. The White House has the Office of Management and Budget. We have the Congressional Budget Office. It is bipartisan. It is our scorekeeper. Let us quit fussing about whose numbers and whose projections we are going to use. Let us agree on the Congressional Budget Office.

Every once in awhile we would say, where there is differences why do they not just add up the two and divide by two and take an average and that becomes something that we can use that is consistent.